United Nations A/AC.154/320

General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 October 1998

Original: English

Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Letter dated 19 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

I have the honour to forward herewith a paper for consideration concerning security arrangements during the general debates at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly (see annex).

I kindly request that the enclosed text be brought to the attention of the members of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country with a view to discussing it at one of the Committee's meetings.

(Signed) S. **Lavrov**

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Annex

[Original: Russian]

Paper for consideration submitted by the Russian Federation

The Russian Federation would like to make some comments concerning the organization and implementation of security measures during the general debate at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly while a number of Heads of State and Government were present at United Nations Headquarters in that connection.

We understood the "special circumstances" which compelled the host country authorities and other competent services to take heightened security measures during that period. In this connection, it was understandable that it was difficult to avoid organizational blunders. In our view, a careful analysis of the arrangements could be useful in drawing up measures at that level in the future.

We should like to point out that there was some lack of coordination between the actions of the protocol services and security services of the United Nations Secretariat and the host country authorities, as a result of which members of the Russian delegation and officials of our Mission, including the Permanent Representative, experienced difficulties in gaining access to the United Nations Headquarters building and traffic difficulties in the area.

All the members of the Russian delegation and officials of the Mission were briefed on the subject of strict observance of the traffic and security arrangements set out in note No. HC-32-98 of the United States Mission to the United Nations. That briefing was carried out despite the fact that the aforementioned note reached our Mission by facsimile on Friday, 18 September 1998, at 6.27 p.m., in other words after the end of the last working day prior to the opening of the general debate in the General Assembly Hall.

In practice, however, in carrying out the security measures, the law enforcement organs of the host country permitted a number of departures from the arrangements set out in the aforementioned note. During the period from 21 to 22 September 1998, on several occasions the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, who was travelling in an official car, was refused unimpeded access to First Avenue at 46th Street because the police were not aware of the contents of the aforementioned note. Only after prolonged explanations and the production of a copy of the note was he permitted access.

Moreover, on the aforementioned days, contrary to the arrangements set out in that note, the section of First Avenue from 51st Street to 57th Street was completely closed to parking and was blocked by police cars. As a result, many members of the Russian delegation, having been misled by the note, could not get to the General Assembly Hall in time. On 21 September, at about 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., members of the Russian delegation discovered that the approach to the United Nations garage was completely closed.

There appears to be a lack of coordination between the security services of the host country and the Security and Safety Services of the United Nations Secretariat which is manifested in the frequent and unwarranted checks of diplomats and other members of delegations, including checks within United Nations Headquarters. The impression was created that each of these services was carrying out its own set of safety measures, including the use of security dogs and metal detectors and the visual inspection of personal property. It is absolutely incomprehensible why it was prohibited to leave the elevators on the second floor at the entrance to the North Lounge.

We would suggest that the carrying out of measures, even at such a high level, should not impede the normal work of Missions and delegations.

In this connection, we would be grateful if the host country could explain its decision-making practices and its coordination with the Secretariat in the taking of such decisions on security measures, including practical procedures for agreeing on security arrangements within United Nations Headquarters and establishing limits on access to the United Nations garage and on traffic movements and the parking of cars in the area adjacent to United Nations Headquarters. We would also suggest that it would be advisable to consider this question at a meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country in order to work out possible recommendations to ensure the adequate and coordinated functioning of the competent services when heightened security measures are taken in the United Nations.